

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
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INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, RH, MI
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BANDA'S VIEWS ON RHODESIA NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA

1. ON DECEMBER 16 I CALLED ON PRESIDENT BANDA IN ZOMBA TO
PRESENT PC DIRECTOR JOHN DELLENBACK AND WITH HOPE OF DISCUSSING
PC FUTURE IN MALAWI. BANDA WAS EVIDENTLY NOT PREPARED OR
INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC BUT REPLIED WITH INTEREST TO MY QUESTION
RE HIS OUTLOOK FOR CHANCES OF SUCCESS AT GENEVA.

2. BANDA SAID IN HIS VIEW ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR SUCCESSFUL
OUTCOME IS IF BRITISH WILL AGREE TO ACCEPT MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY
IN INTERIM, TRANSITION GOVERNMENT. HE FEELS MUGABE IS STRONGLY
INFLUENCED IF NOT CONTROLLED BY FORCES OPPOSED TO ANY PEACEFUL
SETTLEMENT (HE LATER IDENTIFIED THESE AS ZAMORA MACHEL AND THE
"SOVIETS BEHIND HIM") AND SAYS NKOMO IS ALSO SO INFLUENCED BUT
NOT SO COMPLETELY CONTROLLED. HE REMARKED, "I HAVE KNOWN NKOMO
FOR MANY YEARS. HE IS NOT A STRONG MAN, NOT A LEADER." MUGABE,
HE SAYS, HAS NO FOLLOWING WITHIN RHODESIA.

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3. WITH REGARD TO SITHOLE, WHOM HE HAS ALSO KNOWN FOR MANY
YEARS, HE REMARKED THAT ONCE HE WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED HIM THE
MOST CAPABLE MAN TO LEAD A BLACK MAJORITY GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA.
NOW, HOWEVER, SITHOLE HAVING MADE THE MISTAKE OF LEAVING
RHODESIA, HAS FOUND HIS SUPPORT BASE SERIOUSLY ERODED AND BANDA

DOUBTS THAT HE COULD MAINTAIN HIS POSITION IF GIVEN THE TOP SPOT. THIS, HE NOTED, LEAVES BISHOP MUZOREWA AS A STRONG CONTENDER. HE IS NOT AN EXPERIENCED POLITICAL LEADER AND IN BANDA'S OPINION NOT VERY ABLE, BUT HE HAS KEPT HIS ROOTS IN RHODESIA AND HIS AMBITION FOR THE TOP JOB FOR HIMSELF HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN STRONGLY WHETTED BY THE RECENT RECEPTION HE RECEIVED. BANDA SPECULATED THAT IF THE BISHOP WOULD SURROUND HIMSELF WITH GOOD MEN HE MIGHT NOT DO TOO BADLY. IN THIS REGARD HE SPOKE HIGHLY OF DR. ELLIOTT GABELLAH AND OBSERVED THAT THE BISHOP WOULD DO WELL TO LISTEN TO HIM.

4. BOTH SITHOLE AND NKOMO HAVE BEEN HERE IN RECENT WEEKS TO "SEEK MY ADVICE," BANDA SAID.

COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT BANDA HAS KNOWN THE CURRENT CAST OF CHARACTERS FOR A LONG TIME, AND IT HAD PREVIOUSLY COME TO OUR ATTENTION THAT NKOMO AND SITHOLE WERE HERE IN RECENT PAST WEEKS. MUZOREWA HAS ALSO COME HERE OFTEN. IT IS PROBABLE THAT BANDA GIVES THEM ALL SOUND COUNSEL OF MODERATION, CONTACT AND DIALOGUE, BUT WE MUST ADMIT A CERTAIN SURPRISE THAT THEY BOTH COME TO BANDA SINCE BANDA HAS SO FIRMLY REMOVED HIMSELF FROM THE REALLY MEANINGFUL ROLE HE MIGHT HAVE ONCE PLAYED.

STEVENSON

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